

The United Church (North)
New Haven, Connecticut
New Haven Co.

HABS No. 3-1
HABS
CONN
5-NEWHA
2

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District # 3

Historic American Buildings Survey
Harold H. Davis, District Officer
29 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, Conn.

THE UNITED CHURCH ¹
New Haven, New Haven County
Connecticut

Owner: United Church.

Date of Erection: 1815 (index Card); 1814 (following page and the drawings).

Architect: David Hoadley.

Builder: David Hoadley.

Present Condition: Good.

Number of Stories: Two.

Materials of Construction: Brick.

Other Existing Records: See text.²

Additional Data: See following pages.

¹ Also called "Old North Church" (Ware, The Georgian Period, volume 6, plate 361).

² Also see Embury, Aymar, II, Early American Churches, 1914, pp.115,116; Ware, W.R., The Georgian Period, volume 6, plate 361.

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THE UNITED CHURCH
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The United Church was first opened for use on Wednesday, December 20, 1815; the pastor was the Rev. Samuel Merwin. Until its construction, the congregation had occupied two separate edifices, one of which was the Fair Haven Society in 1770 that stood very nearly upon the present site of the United Church.

The United Church is a union of what once were three independent church organizations, namely the White Haven Church (formed in 1742), the Fair Haven Church (formed by a secession from the White Haven Church 1769) and the Third Congregational Church (formed in 1826).

Early in 1813, the Ecclesiastical Society of the First Church pulled down their church edifice for the purpose of erecting a better one. The new and present United Church was finished in 1814.

In 1812, when it was determined to build "a new house of worship, on a scale to meet the demands of the times", twenty members of the society known as the "United Societies of White Haven and Fair Haven" were founded to undertake this work.

They were "to build a brick church on the Green, on or near the site of the Fair Haven Church, of such dimensions and structure as should be satisfactory to a special building committee". An eighth of the pews should be re-

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served for the society and the remaining seven-eighths should be sold to meet the cost of construction, with interest". If they sold for more than was so required, the balance should belong to the Society; if for less, the Society would reimburse the contractors for the deficiency.

One of the twenty contractors was Ebenezer Johnson, Jr., a man with taste in architecture who sketched out the general plan of the new church building, particularly that of its exterior. David Hoadley, who was both an architect and builder, took the contract for the erection of the church and proceeding on the lines indicated by Mr. Johnson, gave it its final form. All the details of the steeple were probably of his creation.

The United Church is generally considered one of the best examples of American Ecclesiastical Architecture of the early nineteenth century.

The original cost of the church was a little under \$33,000. The contractors sold their pews for enough to pay off this sum and leave a surplus of about \$5,500. The lumber used by the United Society was bought in Middletown, Connecticut, and although the War of 1812 was then raging, was brought here by water, through the courtesy of Commodore Hardy, then Commanding the British blockading squadron on our coast^a who, when his permission was asked, replied that he made no war with religion.

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The church originally had three glass chandeliers of French make hung over the main aisle. The central and larger one still remains--the others were sold in 1850.

At that time the apse, with its handsome pilasters, was added and the present rosewood pulpit placed in it. The original pulpit was a high one of mahogany supported on fluted columns and stood in front of what is now the apse. A section of one of the pulpit pillars is now used to support the baptismal font, and a piece of the damask trimmings is preserved in the parish house. It was furnished with red cushions, as was the present one, until a few years since. The original color was partly dictated by necessity. The war had shut off importations from Europe and no materials suitable for the upholstery of the pulpit were to be had. The covering of the pulpit cushions was the skirt of a wedding dress made from a red silk damask curtain.

Neither the Fair Haven nor the White Haven Churches had had chimneys, and there was, of course, no means of heating them. Small, square shaped foot stoves carried by a handle were brought in on Sundays for the benefit of some of the women, particularly those who were feeble and elderly. Some of those coming from such a distance that they could not conveniently go home during the "intermission" between the morning and afternoon services, clubbed together to provide little cabins on or near the Green where they

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could go for lunch and warm themselves by a fire. These were called "Sabbath Day Houses".

The new church was from the first provided with a chimney, but no stoves were put in or fires built until 1827. Nor was the change carried throughout without strong opposition. It was thought that the heat would be intolerable. One lady, according to tradition, on the first Sunday after the vote to introduce stoves, felt so overcome by the new kind of warmth that she was carried out of the church in a fainting condition. In fact, however, though the stoves had been purchased, they had not been connected with the chimney and no fire had been kindled in them.

In 1850, gas was introduced, the church painted on the outside for the first time, and the galleries slightly lowered at a total expense of \$10,000. In 1887, they were lowered still further. That part occupied by the organ and choir has also been brought forward, to secure more room.

An organ was put into the church in 1818, and replaced by a better one in 1850, and by one still better in 1867, this last costing about \$7,000.

The room over the vestibule, now divided into two rooms, represents one of the earliest steps taken in New England meeting houses toward providing a place for those week-day socials and religious gatherings.

The entire apse in which the pulpit stands was added in 1850. It was designed and executed by Sidney Mason Stone.

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The Rev. Samuel W. S. Dutton (1836-1866) who was opposed to slavery, concealed fugitive slaves in his house and helped them to escape to Canada. In his church was held the Kansas Rifle Meeting in 1855, when eighty men about to leave to help save Kansas from slavery, were pledged twenty-seven rifles from the pulpit in a meeting presided over by Henry Ward Beecher. Later, in this church, was held the funeral services for Capt. E. B. Lines, son of the leader of the expedition, who was killed in the Civil War.

The church furniture in the pulpit and the bell were taken from the demolished Third Church which stood on the site of the present Second National Bank of New Haven.

Compiled by F. Warren Rice

Approved: Wm. H. Davis

Historical data obtained from:

History and Antiquities of New Haven-Barber Pages 25, 26, 59

History of the United Church, Champion 20

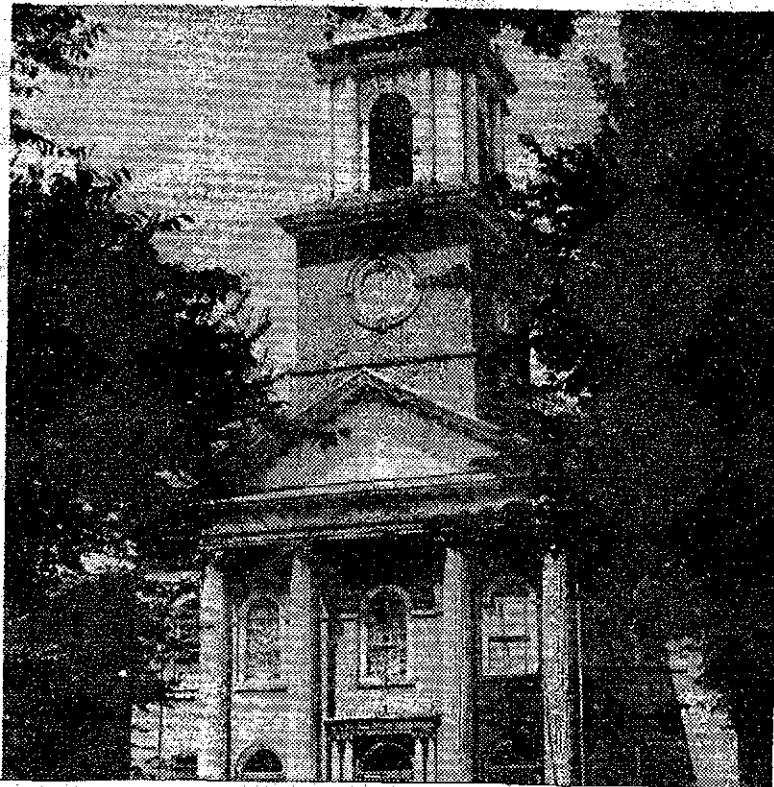
Historical Sketch of the United Society-Pardee 47

Papers, New Haven Colony Historical Society I-113; V, 177

Reviewed 1936, H.C.F.

NEW HAVEN EVENING REGISTER, WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 1937

United Church Gets Red Coat As Sand-Blasters Remove Paint



CLEAR

Clearance of Odd Bed

Pieces and Small * St

* 2 and 3 Piece Suites